

*"I don't bid like that because if I do, I will  
end up sleeping on the couch."*

*Mike Passell*

# SLEEPING ON THE COUCH

THE ADVENTURES OF DAVE PLAYING  
BRIDGE WITH HIS WIFE, ANNE

David Caprera

Foreword by Mike Passell

All profits from the sale of this book will be donated to the  
United States Bridge Federation Junior Program

David Caprera

# SLEEPING ON THE COUCH

THE ADVENTURES OF DAVE PLAYING  
BRIDGE WITH HIS WIFE, ANNE



An Honors eBook from Master Point Press

Text © 2019 David Caprera

Cover Image © DNY59

All rights reserved.

Honors Books is an imprint of Master Point Press. All contents, editing and design (excluding cover design) are the sole responsibility of the author.

Master Point Press  
214 Merton St. Suite 205  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
M4S 1A6  
(647) 956-4933

[info@masterpointpress.com](mailto:info@masterpointpress.com)

[www.masterpointpress.com](http://www.masterpointpress.com)

[www.bridgeblogging.com](http://www.bridgeblogging.com)

[www.teachbridge.com](http://www.teachbridge.com)

[www.ebooksbridge.com](http://www.ebooksbridge.com)

ISBN: 978-1-55494-599-3

Cover Design: Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

1 2 3 4 5 6      22 21 20 19

# Table of Contents

Dedication .....	v
Introduction.....	vi
Foreword by Mike Passell .....	viii
How It All Began (April 2013).....	1
Overbidding (May 2013) .....	3
Bidding Judgments (June 2013).....	6
Defined Terms (July 2013).....	9
Sleeping on the Sofa in the Garage (August 2013).....	12
“Changing Horses” or How I Ended Up Sleeping in the Stables (October 2013) .....	15
Pink Points (December 2013).....	19
Neither Thinking nor Playing (January 2014) .....	22
Prospect Theory (March 2014).....	25
Genius Bids (April 2014).....	28
Zero Tolerance? (May 2014) .....	31
The Beer Card (June 2014).....	34
Juniors Part One (July 2014).....	37
Juniors Part Two (August 2014).....	41
Getting Off the Endplay (September 2014).....	44
A Defensive Claim (October 2014) .....	47
Too Many Trains (November 2014).....	50
Jump Shifts by Advancer (December 2014).....	54
“The Loser’s Swiss” (January 2015) .....	57
“The Left Jab” (February 2015).....	63
Cuddling on the Couch (March 2015) .....	67
“Math Suks” (April 2015).....	74
“Giving Count” (May 2015).....	77
“The Singleton King” (June 2015) .....	80
“Bridge Religion” (July 2015).....	83
Eight Ever, Nine Never” (August 2015).....	86
Unherringly (September 2015) .....	90
“Grand” Bidding (October 2015).....	93

Cheating (November 2015).....	96
Information Theory (December 2015).....	100
Second Hand High (January 2016).....	105
“Oops!” (February 2016).....	111
To Be Young Again (March 2016).....	113
Genius Leads (April 2016).....	117
“Going Pro” (May 2016).....	119
Bridge Whirlies (June 2016).....	123
An Alarm Clock (July 2016).....	127
How to Motivate Juniors (September 2016).....	130
Two for One (October 2016).....	133
Mostly Hopeless (November 2016).....	136
Sometimes Your Partner is the Windshield & You are the Bug (December 2016).....	140
Cuba (January 2017).....	142
Esoteric Nonsense (February 2017).....	146
Playing Poker (March 2017).....	150
Bramley’s Rule (April 2017).....	153
Opening Light (May 2017).....	157
The Grand Slam (June 2017).....	161
A TYP Bid (July 2017).....	167
Second Hand Higher (August 2017).....	170
Street Cred (September 2017).....	173
Through Another’s Eyes (October 2017).....	177
Build the Wall! (November 2017).....	181
Hamman’s Rule” (December 2017).....	185
Return on Equity (January 2018).....	188
Our Bidding Affected My Play (February 2018).....	194
“Clocking” a Hand (March 2018).....	198
Acknowledgements.....	202

## **Dedication**

To Anne, my partner in bridge as well as life, for putting up  
with me.

And to all the juniors who have also put up with me, I love you  
too, but why do you always have to bid so much?

## Introduction

I started playing bridge in college in the early 1970's. It is also in college where I met Anne Brenner. I have always said that it was fortunate that I did not discover duplicate until after I finished undergrad for I believe that there is serious doubt I would have made it through. Annie and I joined the ACBL in 1975 and earned our first masterpoints that summer at the Princeton N.J. YMCA. We were married in 1976. Forty-three years and a combined 27,000+ masterpoints later we are still playing as partners and still married.

For five years, beginning in 2013, I wrote a monthly column for the ACBL District 17 in "The Contract Bridge Forum", a publication of the Western Conference. This book is a compilation of those columns. The column proved to be an outlet that enabled me to write about a wide range of bridge topics I found to be of interest. It also allowed me to have fun with the idea of playing bridge with one's spouse. I admit I took some literary license with some of the deals I wrote about. For example, notwithstanding what you may read, I never really had to sleep in the garage. I have also rewritten the columns in minor ways (correcting errors as I went) in an attempt to give some continuity to you as the reader.

I have a confession to make. I wrote the columns for me. I was given great latitude to write about whatever I wanted. A few of the columns are pretty basic and I would say are "beginner/intermediate". But others are esoteric and "cutting edge." Hopefully, there is something for everyone.

Doing anything competitive with one's spouse can be stressful. Annie and I play bridge together and it is "always competitive." Self-deprecating humor is one way of reducing that stress. If you can't laugh at yourself, what can you laugh at?

It is my hope that by publishing a book of my columns, you, too, will be able to laugh at me. I make no warranties or representations to the effect that this book will improve your bridge game but I hope I get at least a smile.

## Foreword

by Mike Passell

I have never written a foreword or endorsed a bridge book before; however, this is more than just another series of words, bridge hands, or attempt at teaching. This book is a collaboration of an adventure Dave has put into words. The combination of humor, great actual bridge hands, and Dave's self-deprecating style of writing makes this a must read. I confess to getting the ball rolling a number of years ago by telling him his bid may have been correct, but if he made it he would end up sleeping on the couch.

And then there are the literally hundreds of emails with Dave's bridge question of the day. Dave's passion for bridge translates into him being the man of a million questions. Have you heard of "U-Haul"? I think Dave's middle name should be "U-Hold": "Mike, you hold...", always with a new question. Just this last week he wrote, "Annie and I had the auction 1S-2C-3C-3S-5D. I intended 5D as Six Card Keycard Exclusion Blackwood. We had no prior agreement. Now I am on the couch again. Do you think that I should get a new blanket?" You will find Dave's passion also rings through in his writing.

I might have called this book *Dave and Annie's Adventures and Misadventures at the Bridge Table*, but that would be unfair to Annie, a fine player in her own right, who puts up with more than should be experienced by any spouse. I enjoyed *Sleeping on the Couch* and I think you will too.

## How It All Began (April 2013)

The title of the book derives from a hand I once held in a regional knockout of

♠A ♥86542 ♦K9 ♣K10754.

Partner opens 1♦ and the auction (with the opponents passing throughout) proceeds 1♦-1♥; 1♠-1NT; 2♣-? I found the “wonder bid” of 3♥ and played it there. When I later showed the hand to my friend and mentor, and world class bridge player, Mike Passell, he said, without missing a beat, (although I have suspicions that by the time I asked him the story had made the rounds), “I am not bidding 3♥ because if I do, I may end up sleeping on the couch.”

I have always enjoyed learning. I ask questions from people I respect but, in the end, I have to make my own decisions. It isn't always easy. Consider: You hold

♠AJ ♥63 ♦AK87 ♣AQ932.

RHO opens 1♥ and you bid 2♣. Your suit is bad for a 2/1 overcall, but you have a lot of points and I believe you really have little choice. The auction proceeds (1♥)-2♣-(P)-P; (2♥). What's your call?

You have two choices, both of them flawed. You can double, which will show your extra values and be a winner in the event that partner has a heart stack or a weak hand with long spades, or you can bid 2NT, which shows secondary diamonds but not all of the values you have, suggests 10 minor suit cards, and leaves you with a bit of a quandary should partner bid either minor. I gave this hand to two people I respect. Both are bridge professionals who have won multiple national championships. Expert 1 said, “2NT. It's all about the pattern. Double shows a third spade.” Expert 2 said, “Double. 2NT is awful. Bridge is too hard for double to promise three spades.”

Who is right? I think they both are when taken in context. And the context is what your partner is going to expect. Playing with Expert 1, who expects double to show a third spade, 2NT is the correct bid. Playing with Expert 2, who expects big hands to double and doesn't think that double promises a third spade, double is right. And if you dealt a million hands to see which the mathematical winner is, the eventual answer wouldn't be as important as what partner expects.

Partner's actual hand was

♠7653 ♥J74 ♦J95 ♣654.

I chose to double, my partner bid 3♣ (bypassing her 4-card spade suit), and I passed. She did not want to play what could have been a "bad" 4-3 spade fit (bad because any tap in hearts would be taken by my presumed honors in spades.) Worse yet would have been the actual 4-2. Had I bid 2NT, the result could have been the same. But for this partnership, it was right to double. Because when your partner is your wife, you don't want to end up, yet again, sleeping on the couch.

## Overbidding (May 2013)

I picked up

♠K1086 ♥Q6 ♦AJ42 ♣AQ5

as dealer, bidding with my wife. Our 1NT opening in this position is 14-16, so I made the obvious choice.

Partner bid 2♥, transfer to spades and my hand, in my eyes, became huge. There are a number of “super accept” variations, but we have chosen to keep it simple and not give away information (I am not a fan of variations where opener can have three trump because it violates the Law, nor where opener patterns out because it is often better to have the unbalanced hand be described to the balanced hand, but using 2M+1 as a relay or showing a side suit source of tricks has some appeal to me.)

We just play that a jump to 3M shows four trump and a max, over which responder can bid the next step to show a balanced hand or show shortness up the line with a slam try. We call this “BUTL,” and there are ten different situations in our partnership agreements where it comes into play (e.g., after 1M-3M, Drury, etc.) So, I bid 3♠.

Annie rebid 4♦ showing shortness and slam aspirations. Now my huge hand became humongous. (“Humongous” started as college slang in the 1960’s but has now made it into Webster’s and the Oxford English Dictionary.) Here is where I abused system and made it to the couch. After 4♦, I had one under the trump suit, 4♥ in this case, available as Last Train, a slam try without promising or denying a control in hearts. This was clearly my best call given my heart holding and my wasted ♦J. But no, I bid 4NT keycard, found one keycard and then the spade queen, and bid 6♠.

Partner held

♠AQJ75 ♥543 ♦Q ♣KJ106.

Oops. Before we get to the obvious problem with the contract, let's look at the auction from Annie's side of the table. After my super accept, we could make slam with as little as

♠K432 ♥A2 ♦5432 ♣AQ2

if spades are 2-2, and that is 13 HCP. Throw in a red suit king and slam is close to cold. So, a slam try is aggressive but reasonable. However, showing a singleton holding an honor is a problem, as partner is not going to value secondary honors in that suit. If I had held

♠K432 ♥A2 ♦K432 ♣AQ2

I would have devalued the king of diamonds and signed off. An alternative for Annie would be to make a balanced slam try. This would have been my choice in her position with a singleton diamond king, but it's hard to know what to do with the singleton queen. If responder put her 13 HCP's anywhere outside of the diamond suit slam is reasonable.

So, we bid to 6♠, or Annie would say that I bid to 6♠. And this is where there is a difference between those who value bidding in its purity, and those who value results (the "bed sleepers" and the "couchers"). Opening leader held

♠943 ♥K1087 ♦K1093 ♣42

and the entire deal was:

	♠AQJ75	
	♥543	
	♦Q	
	♣KJ106	
♠943		♠2
♥K1087		♥AJ92
♦K1093		♦8765
♣42		♣9873
	♠K1086	
	♥Q6	
	♦AJ42	
	♣AQ5	

After a conservative trump lead declarer can make 6♠ on a “double dummy reversal.” Win the trump in dummy, cross to the ♦A, ruff a diamond, cross twice more in clubs (judging that 3=5+=2+=2+ is more likely than clubs 5-1, particularly given the lead and no opposition bidding), to ruff two more diamonds, and finally cross in trump, pull the last one and claim 12 tricks. I ask you. “Should bidding and making slam on these cards deserve such a sad fate as sleeping in sofa city?”

## Bidding Judgments (June 2013)

This installment of how I ended up on the couch arises as a result of our partnership agreement to play 1M-2♣ as potentially “short.” Our general approach is Precision, a strong club and limited opening bids of 1♦ and 1M (typically 11-15 HCP). 1M is a 5+ card suit with a response of 1NT as “semi-forcing”, 2NT as a major suit raise, and a two-over-one as game forcing.

To preserve the integrity of 1M-2♦ (where we prefer responder to have a “reasonable suit”) and 1♠-2♥ (where we require responder to have at least a five-card suit) we have chosen to play that 1M-2♣ may be natural, but may also be bid when holding a balanced hand that would probably have bid 2NT in the days when 1M-2NT was natural and forcing. This means that responder would bid 2♣ both when holding

♠Ax ♥xxxx ♦Ax ♣KQxxx

(everyone’s normal 2♣ bid) and when holding

♠Axx ♥KQ10x ♦Jxxx ♣Kx.

The two-card 2♣ response is rare; we alert it, but we expect that responder will have at least three clubs.

This creates a problem with opener’s rebid for an opening hand such as the following (which I held):

♠KQ953 ♥-- ♦KQ84 ♣A1053.

After 1♠-2♣ we play that 3♦ and 3♥ are splinters, promising 4+ card club support. (We have since changed to BOSCO where a 3NT rebid shows exactly 5=0=4=4, after which we play Mulberry where 4♣ forces 4♦ followed by a slam invite, 4♦ forces 4♥ to start a sign-off, and 4♥, 4♠ and 4NT are Keycard in the low, middle and high suits respectively.)

What is opener to do? If responder is short in clubs with four diamonds, then a 2♦ rebid will work out best. However, if responder has a normal 2♣ bid such as

♠A5 ♥9864 ♦A7 ♣KQ974,

then these two hands mesh perfectly for a grand slam in clubs on 27 HCP, and you would be disappointed/embarrassed if you did not get to at least 6♣. The problem with rebidding 2♦ is that you will never be able to convince partner that you have 4-card support and an outside void. I chose to rebid 3♥ on the “when you have trump you raise” theory of life, something I believe in pretty strongly.

Responder’s actual hand,

♠A7 ♥KQ10 ♦J53 ♣KQ876

is difficult in any method. It has the KQxxx of everyone’s 2♣ response, but it also has KQ10 in the suit in which I showed shortness. Recognizing that opener is limited to 15 HCP by his 1♠ opening bid, shortness in hearts makes responder’s hand scream for rebidding 3NT. But the 9-card club fit and the perfect cards outside of hearts makes 6♣ a percentage contract, even though the partnership is “off two aces.”

Incidentally, 3NT is not an unlikely final contract no matter what opener chooses to rebid - Auction one: 1♠-2♣; 3♥-3NT; Auction two: 1♠-2♣; 2♦-2NT; 3♣-3NT. So, it isn’t clear from this hand whether opener is better off splintering or rebidding 2♦. Yes, I know that one hand doesn’t prove anything. I often think that a computer simulation of many hands is a good approach, but in this case, there is a lot of judgment and maybe there are too many variables involved.

Although I was sympathetic to partner’s rebid of 3NT with a double stopper in hearts opposite a limited opening bid, it is the post mortem that was the problem that put me “on the sofa.” Annie said she “knew” that bidding 2♦ was the “right choice.” I confessed that I “didn’t know” whether either 2♦ or 3♥ was “right,” but I suggested that it was unknowable and that

“she couldn’t know either.” The proposed resolution was to email the hand around to a number of people we respect, to seek their opinion and final judgment.

One of the people I respect the most, whom I will call “Mike” (largely because that’s what his parents chose to call him), is a walking hand simulator because he has played for so long and seen so many hands that he has a record of experience second to none. Mike’s answer was “bid 2♦ because 2♣ could be short.” While Annie must have felt vindicated, it was the fact that “she knew” and I told her that “she couldn’t know” that got me sleeping on the couch.

## Defined Terms (July 2013)

In the Santa Fe Sectional Compact KO, I picked up in first chair with everyone vulnerable,

♠J109752 ♥QJ64 ♦A85 ♣--.

I know there are those who would open 2♠ with this hand. I think that is “really sick.” I could not live with myself, even if I had understanding teammates, if I came back with +140 when partner tabled

♠8 ♥AK5 ♦KQJ976 ♣762,

and heard “6♦, minus 1370.” Nor would I enjoy it if partner held

♠43 ♥K10853 ♦KQ7 ♣A54,

and hear my teammates announced “4♥, minus 620.”

Annie and I play a variation of Ogust after a weak two bid opening that does not allow us to disclose holding four cards in the other major. (We are currently considering whether we should change that and ultimately did change so that, when vulnerable, we show a four-card major second suit, but when nonvulnerable use the step to say we preempted on a five-card suit.) But even if we did, I still think opening 2♠ on this hand would be wrong. So, in first chair, I passed.

Annie actually held

♠AQ ♥A5 ♦K964 ♣AQ1054

and opened 2NT in third chair. We play a strong club system and a third chair vulnerable 2NT is supposed to be 20-21 high card points. But the alternative is to open an artificial 1♣, and this hand could then become awkward to bid. That plus the five-card club suit makes this hand an upgrade in my book. Our auction proceeded P-2NT; 3♣-3♦; 4♥!- (hesitation for eternity) 4♠-P. Before the opening lead was made, Annie said “I have no idea what 4♥ was.”

We have the agreement after a 1NT opening that we play “delayed Texas transfers,” where the auction 1NT-2♣; 2♦-4♥ shows 6 spades and 4 hearts so that the opener can be the declarer in a game contract of 4♠. Had Annie opened 1NT, that would have been the way we would have bid my hand. But we have no similar agreement as to opening 2NT.

I made a bad bid for several reasons. First, it is not something covered in our system notes. In the beginning of our notes we have a glossary of terms that we use regularly. Some are obvious: NT, S, H, D, C, DBL, RDBL, etc. But we also have two that are not so obvious: TYP and DNE. TYP is defined as “torture your partner and a precursor to DNE.” DNE is defined as “does not exist.” My bid was a clear TYP.

Second, it wasn’t a very good hand evaluation in that partner could hold a normal minimum 1NT opener that would flop for 6♠ - e.g.,

♠KQ3 ♥AK5 ♦K4 ♣97652,

and she had opened 2NT. Our system methods gave me a better sequence: 2NT-3♣; 3♦-3♥; 3NT-4♣, where 3♥ is “Smolen,” showing five or more spades and four hearts; if opener rebids 3NT you may bid 4m to show shortness in that suit with a 6-4 hand. It may still be hard to get to 6♠ every time it’s right, but I gave us no chance.

Third, it is the sort of bid that could find me sleeping on the couch.

I am not sure how Annie finally guessed that I was trying to show a 6-4, and I’m thankful that she did. But she wasn’t happy about it!”

One of the problems with being human is that once you have expended all your energy on deciphering partner’s bidding, you have little left for the play. The opening lead was the ten of hearts and dummy was tabled. Ten tricks look easy and, particularly after the lead, are pretty much guaranteed. But we were playing with a strange set of conditions - an early round of a small compact KO, where three teams played and two

advanced, which is the equivalent of playing two simultaneous 6-board matches. In a long IMP match safety plays are important and you shouldn't waste your energy "sweating the overtricks" because the occasional IMP lost is more than covered by the game bonus. But in a 6-board match you "don't throw overtricks on the floor" to use a Jeff Meckstroth expression, because it is likely the match may be won or lost by a small differential.

Annie gets full marks for her play, particularly laudable after having suffered so in the auction. She covered the ten of hearts with the queen, RHO played the king (perhaps not best to cover as it is pretty unlikely that the opening lead is from the ace into a 2NT opener) and she won the ace. She played a heart back to the jack and ruffed a heart with the ace of spades as her LHO pitched a club.

She was then able to cross back to dummy and ruff the fourth heart with the queen of spades, which LHO overruffed for the opponent's only trick. Had she ruffed the first heart with the queen, LHO would have overruffed and a spade return would have held her to 11 tricks. We won an IMP on that board and the winning margin for the 6-board match was, I kid you not, 30 IMPs instead of 29. But that's not the point. And it didn't keep me from having to sleep on the couch.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR (FROM DAVE'S FRIENDS)

“When they travel to tournaments, Dave chooses their hotel by the comfort of the sofas.”  
Chris Compton

“If Dave had just bid 3NT and made it, he could have avoided the couch.”  
Bob Hamman

“If he slept on the couch that often playing Precision, I don't want to imagine where he would have slept playing 2/1.”  
Jeff Meckstroth

“The guy plays like he didn't get a good night's sleep.”  
Eddie Wold

“Annie deserves a bed of her own.”  
Kate McCallum

“I have played against Annie and Dave quite a bit. My advice to Dave is to keep your enemies close and your couch closer.”  
Bobby Levin

“Dave has a great teaching style for the juniors. But you can only carry ‘do as I say, not as I do’ so far.”  
Michael Rosenberg

“For forty years I've been telling you to be more practical and you do this to me?”  
Jack Oest

“Even bridge bums occasionally sleep in a bed.”  
Alan Sontag

“Dave who?”  
Judy Hummel

“Perhaps Dave should play backgammon instead.”  
Kit Woolsey

“Mostly hopeless.”  
David Grainger

“Dave, it is time to come to bed now.”  
Anne Brenner